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CREATİVİTY AT THE EDGES OF THE
MUGHAM MODEL: TERMS AND EXPERİENCES

Abstract. While doing fieldwork in Azerbaijan from 2014 for three consecutive years, taking lessons on the tar with masters of various lineages, I was struck by the vast body of local terminology that native musicians utilize when talking about *mugham* creativity. In addition to words that identify particular gestures and ways of structuring musical material, musicians articulate with passion, sophistication, and emphasis how they *experience* creativity. My goal in the present article is to undertake a phenomenological analysis of *mugham* creativity as a "lived experience" by exploring native terminology for creativity and performed musical structures. I will focus on the different types of creativity of tar performers (fretted, waisted lute), illustrated with musical examples taken from *mugham segah.* Using hermeneutic phenomenology of Paul Ricoeur, I argue that heightened creativity that leads to "new" music beyond the learned "model" is a result of musicians' interpretation and imagination of meanings, expressed in the sung *ghazal* poetry.
Key words: Azerbaijani mugham, creativity, tar, segah, phenomenology.
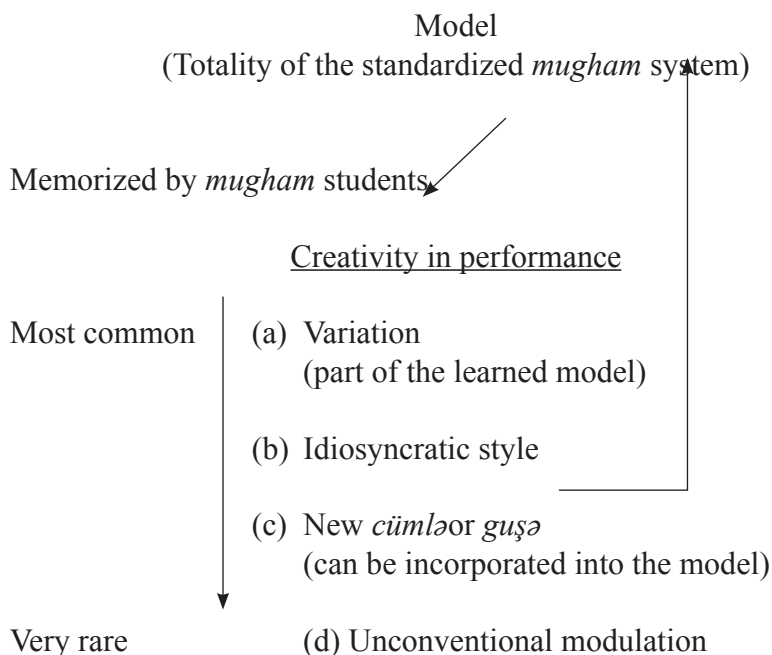
Introduction. While doing fieldwork in Azerbaijan from 2014 for three consecutive years, taking lessons on the tar with masters of various lineages, I was struck by the vast body of local terminology that native musicians utilize when talking about *mugham* creativity[1]. In addition to words that identify particular gestures and ways of structuring musical material, musicians articulate with passion, sophistication, and emphasis how they *experience* creativity. My goal in the present work is to undertake a phenomenological analysis of *mugham* creativity as a "lived experience" by exploring native terminology

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[1] In this article, I write Azerbaijani words and expressions using the Azerbaijani alphabet, with the exception of the wordsmugham (muğam) and ghazal (qəzəl) because of a previously-established English transliteration for these words with wide currency.

for creativity and performed musical structures. I will focus on the different types of creativity of *tar* performers (fretted, waisted lute), illustrated with musical examples taken from *mugham segah*. Using hermeneutic phenomenology of Paul Ricoeur (1991), I argue that heightened creativity that leads to "new" music beyond the learned "model" is a result of musicians' interpretation and imagination of meanings, expressed in the sung ghazal poetry.

Creativity within and beyond the model. According to the native vocabulary and musical techniques of Azerbaijani musicians, creativity of *mugham* can be placed into the following categories: variation of musical material; idiosyncratic style of a musician; creation of entire musical sentences; and modulation (Dessiatnitchenko 2017). All four forms of creativity, except for the first one, here labelled as "variation", are examples of music beyond the "canon" or "model" which is the standardized form that is learned and memorized by a student of *mugham*. Following Figure 1 below, which is a diagram that summarizes this scheme, I will discuss each form of creativity in separate sections.

Figure 1: Model and creativity of *mugham*

Model
(Totality of the standardized *mugham* system)

Memorized by *mugham* students

Creativity in performance

Most common | (a) Variation
(part of the learned model)

(b) Idiosyncratic style

(c) New *cümlə* or *guşə*
(can be incorporated into the model)

Very rare | (d) Unconventional modulation

1. Variation

Variation of learned material is the overriding form of creativity in *mugham*, continuously employed in a performance. Short musical gestures, cadences, and whole musical sentences are spontaneously interchanged and slightly modified. Figure 1 shows notations of different variations employed for cadences in *mugham segah.*
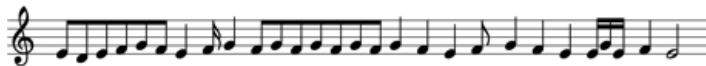
Figure 2: Segahcadences

Version 1:

Version 2:

Version 3

Version 4

Students of *mugham* allocate much time and effort to learning the repertoire of this modal system, memorizing the same *mugham* cyclical form such as segah in various versions belonging to different teachers and lineages, tête-à-tête and from recordings. After many different versions are internalized, a musician automatically engages in a kind of creativity when he or she spontaneously chooses gestures and phrases from the vast body of the learned material; creativity comparable to what has been identified as "controlled variation" by Laudan Nooshin (2015, 115), "formulaic variation" by Thomas

Turino (2009, 105) or "strategic" creativity by Jean During (1987, 23).As with other forms of creativity, variation is not explicitly taught. Perhaps, as Nooshin suggests, the learned system already contains within it the seeds for inventive variation: through learning the *radif*"students internalize both specific material (motifs or melodies, for instance) and, crucially, compositional principles or techniques for developing that material" (Nooshin 2015, 125). While not taught, creativity of this type is expected from a mature musician. When it comes to variation among cadences, for example, those performers who repeat the same cadential material from one performance to the nextare viewed as unskilled. When I asked one of my teachers Eldar Miriyev[2] about alteration of cadences, he said "Yes, this is how it is demanded! You must not repeat things. This means you do not have enough knowledge!" (EldarMiriyev, interview, June 8, 2015).

The technique of variation is so ingrained in the process of performing *mugham* that there is no separate word for it as a musical manifestation, however, there is a term for its experience – *mugham təfəkkürüor "mugham* thinking." Musicians describe this type of creativity as having the experience of conscious manipulation of musical material, or an activity of the "mind."

Talking about "*mugham* thinking", many *tar* musicians stress that there are also instances when this process leads to "new" music, experienced via intuition (vs. the mind) as an "explosion of thinking", "explosion of imagination", and "revelation."One of my teachers explained this dynamic in the following manner:

In *mugham* there is the canon [model], and within its limits there is something like variation. While one is playing the canon, an explosion could happen due to enthusiasm, and then intuition is in charge. After, the musician comes back to the canon and it is the mind which is in charge…. At first a person studies *mugham* for many years, 20 or 25 years. In the context of performing…he gets his own insights. Where do they come from? For example, he may have studied with different teachers, here and there, and suddenly within the limits of this, a musical sentence is created out of nowhere! This is a momentous explosion. There are instances of creativity beyond the model, and this is not at all like variation. Suddenly, there is an explosion outside and beyond the boundaries. This is an explosion of thinking! …But all that has been learned before helps the musician, and something new then can be created (VugarRzayev, interview, October 16, 2015).

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[2] In accordance with the ethical standards of research, the identity of individual interlocutors is disguised when I recount discussions with them and quote them. Only in the case that musicians requested that their identity is not hidden, I mention them by their real name.

What is clear from the musician's explanation is that variation is considered to be an activity within the model but one that leads to moments of "new" music beyond the model. These spontaneous discoveries take the form of an idiosyncratic style, entire musical sentences, and modulation. The terminology of mugham musicians reveals an obvious line that separates variation as a form of creativity within the model from other types of creativity beyond the model. Not only are there different verbal expressions for the musical manifestations of the various creativity types, but there is also a completely different way of talking about the *experience* of creativity within versus beyond the model.

2. Idiosyncratic style

For every *mugham* musician, creating a unique and recognizable style of performance is of utmost importance. Whilst one's style is almost always deeply rooted in the style of one's teachers and main lineage, the addition of something personal is regarded with much more reverence than an austere commitment to past conventions. In addition, an individual mode of performance is one's understanding and interpretation of the existing tradition: a one-of-a-kind contribution to the model. While performing, musicians use these idiosyncratic styles to continuously re-create musical material.

A unique manner of performance is referred to with the following terms: *barmaq* (finger), *yol* (path), *ləhcə* (accent, for singers), and *nəfəs* (breath, for singers). For example, when there is a particular musical gesture played idiosyncratically on the *tar*, it is referred to as the specific performer's *barmaq* (finger) and instrumentalist's name precedes the word *barmaq*, forming a possessive case.

One's *barmaq* forms based on one's own way of using various techniques and miniscule decorations, referred to as *xırdalıq* (decorative gestures). In other words, the aspects that shape one's style are essentially ornamentations of the basic model. However, these are not to be perceived as mere embellishments that are insignificant extra additions to the model. On the contrary, the specificities and details of one's unique style are considered by musicians to be more important than the model itself. In fact, ornament is a vital feature in Iranian classical music (Caron and Safvate 1966; Yarshater 1974) that is closely linked to Azerbaijani *mugham*, both historically and structurally.

Yarshater explains that in Iranian *radif* the musical phrases "…are not exactly melodies, but rather melodic materials, bare skeletons and frameworks, which only through ornaments blossom out as attractive and moving melodies" (Yarshater 1974, 75).

Figure 3 and Figure 4 below feature notations of the first sentence of *segah*-taught as part of the systematized model, followed by the form it takes on the *tar* played by Ramiz Guliyev, a renowned virtuoso known for his unique manner of performance. I divided the sentence into separate parts in order to show more clearly how the model is elaborated by an individual musician.

Figure 3: First sentence of mugham segahtaught as the bare model to a tar student[3]

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[3] Notwithstanding the process of Westernization of mugham and accompanying temperament of instruments in the Soviet era, few microtonal frets have been retained on tar. Today, musicians debate the use of microtonal frets and many add extra frets to their tars as they seek to recover the "pure" mugham (Dessiatnitchenko 2017) . In this article, I show the most common manner of performance, which includes using a microtone between B and C as indicated in these notations. However, other versions with additional frets and tones exist among musicians.

Figure 4: First sentence of segahperformed
by Ramiz Guliyev on the tar

A.

B.

C.

D.

Figures 3 and 4 show how the *barmaq* of Ramiz Guliyev is an elaboration of the model using his idiosyncratic plectrum gestures and fast virtuosic passages. His version takes twice as much time to perform and is peppered with numerous dramatic silences and the employment of *xun*(sorrow) when the *tar* is shaken in various ways to create an echo effect. While notations in Figures 3 and 4 donot capture all the details, they do reflect to an extent the specificity of this musician's style.

I had a chance to take lessons with Ramiz Guliyev and interview him about his *barmaq*. Speaking about how his particular way of playing *mugham* originated, he emphasized spontaneity and "a new spiritual inner world and spiritual feeling" that "filled" him as a result of his "discovery"of his own *barmaq* (Ramiz Guliyev, interview, December 19, 2014). Another master with whomI took *tar* lessons talked about his barmaqas such:

> Through *mugham*, each performer must show his or her own heart. This cannot be taught. I do not play the paths of my teachers; I have my idiosyncratic style, my own plectrum method. My style formed as I just played by myself. I learned the entire *mugham* repertoire, and I was only 22 when it first began to form [performs with much emotional intensity]. This is my own *barmaq*, these are my own melismas! I don't know how, I just play with my heart, I play from my self [*Mən ürəyimlə çalıram, özumdən çalıram*] (Farhat Ahmedov, interview, December 7, 2015).

In contrast to discussions about variation as a form of creativity, the musicians' reflections on their individual performance styles reference the ineffable, including spirituality and the Divine, said to be implicated in the experience. It seems that there are possibilities beyond the learned model that become instances of inexplicable musical insight with this form of creativity.

3.   Creation of new sentences

The words *barmaq, yol, nəfəs, ləhcə,* and *xırdalıq* are related to the creation of musical units of different size and complexity: guşəand *cümlə. Cümlə* are shorter phrases that are inextricable from the section of a *mugham* in which they are played and are approximately one musical sentence in length. Musicians also come up with complete and separable *guşə*, referred to as "philosophical ideas" (*fəlsəfi fikir*). These are more sophisticated in structure than *cümlə*, often consisting of two sentences that are symmetrical and complementary. *Guşə*, unlike *cümlə*, are analogous to poetical two-line unitsof a *ghazal* and often have their own names. The invention of new musical sen-

tencesin the form of *guşə* is a highly esteemed form of creativity, as exemplified in this interview with one of my teachers:

Arif Mutallibov: within the frames of *mugham*, whole new sentences can be created. I once came up with a sentence in *şur*, and when I played it for my teacher Server Ibrahimov, he began to cry. He said: "this is not mine, it is yours." And he cried.

Author: why did he cry?

AM: I think from happiness – that there is a student he leaves behind who can create *mugham*.

Author: this was a guşə?

AM: yes, but smaller *cümlə* can also be created like that.

A: I remember that when you were teaching me *şur*, you didn't play for me this *guşə* that is your own. You said it was more like your secret…
AM: well yes, maybe at a concert I will use it myself. It must be heard from me.

A: so you remember it always?

AM: yes (Arif Mutallibov, interview, December 4, 2015).

There are two main ways that *cümlə* and *guşə* can be created. First, the sentences are created through *gəzişmə* (walking) using one's idiosyncratic style. *Gəzişmə* is a particular technique that is played while freely covering the steps of a relevant mode section, wherein each tone is decorated with the same miniscule pattern. Second, musicians specifically reference sung *ghazal* poetry as the main catalyst for the creation of both *cümlə* and *guşə*. In this case, *tar* players can perform musical sentences that are a close imitation of the singing or invent sentencesthat are dissimilar from the singer's melodies, but are said to be produced by the inspiration from the *ghazal* meanings. One master explained:

Sometimes when I hear the *mugham* singer's words, I play and I cry along with him! This is from pride! Look at how beautiful these words are! I forget about my playing, I am just playing. And then afterwards when I listen to what I have played, I realize that this was influenced by the words being sung, it was because of the words (ManafMadatov, interview, December 7, 2015).

Some musicians also emphasized *əruz* poetical metres[4] as a source for instrumentalist's creativity. However, it was never made explicit how this occurs, and when asked, musicians proclaimed that the poetical metres are felt and intuited. Therefore, it seems that sensing *əruz*, and not necessarily knowing it, is responsible for this kind of creativity. For example, discussing *əruz*, I heard the following remark:

> I listen to different poetical metres [bəhr] of ghazals and this goes inside me and then I speak with my fingers what it all means. I also accentuate particular notes that are sung. I feel the rhythmic metres of a ghazal and I use it. I try to go into this rhythm and then play like that to influence the audience (Farhat Ahmedov, interview, December 7, 2015).

Figure 5 below presents a notation of *segah*, performed by the renowned *mugham* singer Hajibaba Huseynov with accompaniment on the *tar* by Habib Bayramov. Here, the way in which the instrumentalist imitates the singing is evident. In some instances, the musical fragments of the tar player follow the metrical patterns of the sung texts (highlighted in the figure).

**Figure 5: Hajibaba Huseynov accompanied
by Habib Bayramovon the tar perform *segah mugham*
(recording provided from a private collection of a *mugham master*)**

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[4] *Əruz* is a system of prosody based on the Arabic language that was created in 767 by philologist Al-Khalıl ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi (d.786). The laws of əruz spread throughout the regions of the Islamic East, becoming the framework for *ghazal* poetry in Arabic, Persian, and Turkic languages. The system consists of different metres, each being a pattern of long and short syllables; a structure that repeats and governs every line in a poem.

As demonstrated in Figure 6, the *tar* player follows the *mugham* singer and repeats the melodic outlines in small fragments. Through this kind of imitation, more extensive *cümlə* and *guşə* are created as the momentum of creativity builds throughout the performance.

Numerous *mugham* musicians talk about the experience of *vəhy* when asked about the creationof new *cümlə* or *guşə*. *Vəhy* translates from Azerbaijani to "revelation", and more frequently it is used as a phrase "*vəhy gəlib*", meaning "the coming of revelation."[5] This expression is analogous to *təfəkkür partlayışı* and *təxəyyül partlayışı* because it refers to extreme and momentous creativity that causes "new" music. Musicians stress the spontaneous and intuitive characteristic of this form of creativity and some mention the involvement of the Divine during these instances of "new" music.

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[5] However, I have also heard discontent from some musicians about using the term vəhy because this state, according to them, is only given to Prophets when they receive messages from the Divine. Instead, they assert that more suitable terms are ilham and təb (both mean inspiration), and the involvement of the Divine is still a factor.

4. Unconventional modulation

Modulation is essential to *mugham*. Much the same as invention of an idiosyncratic style, or *cümlə* and *guşə*, modulation that is not part of the model represents music that is "new." While canonized *mugham dəstgah* does feature modulation, these transitions are standardized and are learned by all, therefore not falling into the category of the kind of creativity we are discussing.

Historical records show that in pre-Soviet times, modulation was the main stunt of any performance. There is archival data thatshows how *mugham* parts were strung together in imaginative ways. It seems as if the possibilities to modulate from one mode to another were nearly infinite! Spontaneous transitions between modes still take place in today's performances, albeit infrequently because the required sophisticated level of *mugham* knowledge has been partly lost due to institutionalization and canonization of *mugham* in Soviet Azerbaijan. This is why unusual modulation is regarded with much reverence and value. Studies into cognate musical systems such as the Iranian *radif* also reveal *that morakkab-khanior morakkab-navazi* – which is modulation between different *dəstgah* through shared *guşə* – is the most advanced level of creativity, rarely heard today (Caron and Safvate 1966, 128).

Two indigenous Azerbaijani terms for modulation are *keçid* (passageway) and *intiqal* (change). One master defended the use of the "correct" term *intiqal* for modulation:

This is a completely different thing [from improvisation]. It is called *intiqal* but some musicians say modulation if they do not know the correct word. It means change: switching from one mode to another. There are such *guşə* which help to modulate. And this modulation has a name based on these *guşə*. (Vugar Rzayev, interview, October 16, 2015).

When discussing the experience entailed in this form of creativity with the masters, I encountered references made to the meanings of poetry yet again.

Author: a modulation can be performed via a certain note?

Eldar Miriyev: yes, through a certain note.

A: who usually leads such modulations?

EM: if the *mugham* singeris experienced, he or she can. … this singer I performed with [at one concert where I, the author, was present] can lead such things. He knows *əruz*.

A: is *əruz* important for such modulation?

EM: well, he can get the meaning of the words across clearly because he knows *əruz*.

A: and why is that important?

EM: one must know what one is singing about (Eldar Miriyev, interview, June 8, 2015).

Accurate *əruz* patternsbring clarity to the sung words and therefore the presentation of the meanings is enhanced. This effect could potentially lead to a state of inspiration that in turn fires up one's imagination towards unprecedented modulatory links.

Conclusions: texts and experiences of *mugham* creativity. When mugham is approached with an analysis of native vocabulary and associated musical examples, important aspects of creativity come to the surface. First, there is a clear distinction between creativity within the standardized model and "new" music beyond the model. Heightened creativity manifested through (a) unique styles, (b) creation of new sentences, and (c) unconventional modulation is not only identified with a distinct vocabulary for the performance techniques, but is also discussed with separate terms for its experience such as "revelation", "explosion of imagination", and "explosion of thinking."

Second, "new" music is most often linked to inspiration that arises from the meanings conveyed in *mugham*. Conversations with musicians about each kind of creativity revolved around *ghazal* texts and, more specifically, the influence of sung words on creative engagement with the musical material. According to the masters, even simple variation of the *mugham* repertoire – in itself a form of creativity within the model, identified as "*mugham* thinking" – can happen after one is sufficiently familiar with the spiritual and philosophical meanings that are linked to *mugham*. Thus, the ability to play all the *mughams* does not suffice; a musician should explore other related fields of knowledge, including *ghazal* terminology and structure, the system of prosodical metres, and Islamand its mystical branches. In other words, to achieve heightened creativity, one must acquire a wealth of meanings that the music expresses in addition to learning the *mugham* model.

The sung poetry of *mugham* is a pertinent example of what Paul Ricoeur designates as equivocal symbols with multiple layers of meanings (versus

univocal symbols with a single meaning). *Ghazal* poetry is a "plotless form, which characterizes, first of all, an internal state, but not external action" (Sultanova 2011, 48). There are two semantic poles: you "Beloved/God" and I or the protagonist who is undergoing the state of yearning. The pain of separation from the Divine and the desire for union are the main themes explored in ghazal couplets The poetry is abundant in rich allegories, provocative metaphors, and profound references to stories of the Muslim world, as well as to the sacred texts and lives of the Prophets. To the uninitiated, *ghazal* smay be interpreted as declarations of human love. However, the underlying meaning is often about love for the Divine.

Hermeneutics as "the system by which the deeper significance is revealed beneath the manifest content" (Palmer 1969, 44) is at the core of *mugham* creativity. Creativity then is the being that is submerged in interpretation and imagination of *mugham* meanings while actively structuring the world of *mugham* during a performance. Importantly, this signifies a process when meanings are in flux and the interpretive activity is more of a journey rather than a suspended and transfixed state.

The temporality of *mugham* creativity is therefore comprised of the processes of imagination and interpretation. These are definitive of the temporality of performance because they create a chain wherein imagination/interpretation and experience continuously propel one another in a never-ending cycle. Vincent Crapanzano writes about the chain of interpretation and experience related to the "hinterland" or the unreachable Beyond – such as future, past, ecstasy, memory: "…once the hinterland, once possibility, is articulated, it is somehow fixed and constraining, determining further possibilities: the newly displaced hinterland" (Crapanzano 2004, 23). Similarly, there is a recursive relationship between experience and meanings throughout a performance of *mugham*: musicians are left with possibility for endless interpretation, when subjective experience continuously reaches past symbols which are trying to capture it. My interlocutors talked about "travelling" through a *mugham dəstgah*, comparing the journey to a dive to the bottom of an ocean because it involves this process of continuous engagement with meanings that opens further possibilities for experience.

The possibilities for experience triggered through imagination and interpretation are multiplied when it comes to musical expression that can convey past discursive symbols. While the link to *ghazal* poetry seems to be at the core of the

facets that comprise creativity, musical expression is also a way beyond these meanings. In other words, sung texts trigger and facilitate creativity and simultaneously allow music to surpass discursive representation. This is why Ricoeur opposes the view that language should close on itself. Discourse exists to bring into language an experience, a way of being-in-the-world which precedes it (Ricoeur 1991, 19). Thus, while heightened creativity in its various forms depends on the *ghazal* texts and the meanings that are brought forth in a performance, it seems that the experiences of musicians surpass these meanings.

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Polina Desyatniçenko (Kanada)
Muğam modeli xaricində yaradıcılıq: terminlər və duyğular

Beş il ərzində Azərbaycanda aparılmış elmi-tədqiqat işinin gedişində müxtəlif muğam məktəblərinin öyrənilməsi zamanı musiqi terminologiyasının muğamda kreaktivliklə əlaqədar olan çoxcəhətliliyi aşkar edilmişdir. Poeziyanın musiqi materialının (kompozisiyanın texnikasının) müəyyən jest və quruluş üsulları ilə müşayiət olunan sözlərinə əlavə olaraq ifa zamanı musiqiçilər tərəfindən onların duyğularını əks etdirən xüsusi ifadələrdən də istifadə edilir. Bu məqalənin məqsədi muğam sənətinin tar ifaçılarının yaradıcılıq yanaşmasının müxtəlif növlərinə əsaslanmış fenomenoloji təhlilidir ki, bu da segah muğamının musiqi nümunələrində təcəssümünü tapır. Pol Rikyorun hermenevtik fenomenologiyasından istifadə edən müəllif belə bir nəticəyə gəlmişdir ki, "model" xaricində "yeni" musiqinin yaranmasına gətirib çıxaran yüksəldilmiş kreativlik ifa olunan qəzəllərin poeziyasında ifadə edilən mənaların təfsirinin nəticəsidir.

Açar sözlər: Azərbaycan muğamı, yaradıcılıq, tar, segah, fenomenologiya.

Полина Десятниченко (Канада)
Творчество за пределами мугамной модели: термины и ощущения

В ходе пятилетнего периода научно-исследовательской работы в Азербайджане, при изучении разных школ мугама, было выявлено многообразие музыкальной терминологии связанной с креативностью в мугаме. В дополнение к словам поэзии, сопровождаемым определенными жестами и способами построения музыкального материала (техникой композиции), музыкантами используются специальные выражения, которые передают их ощущения во время выступления. Целью этой статьи является феноменологический анализ искусства мугама, основанный на различных видах творческого подхода исполнителей тара, иллюстрированных музыкальными примерами из мугама сегях. Используя герменевтическую феноменологию Поля Рикёра, автор пришел к выводу, что повышенная креативность, приводящая к появлению «новой» музыки за пределами «модели», является результатом интерпретации смыслов, выраженных в поэзии исполняемых газелей.

Ключевые слова: азербайджанский мугам, творчество, тар, сегях, феноменология.